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ROOM H-405, U.S. CAPITOL
 (202) 225-4121

JOHN I. MILLIS, STAFF DIRECTOR
 PATRICK B. MURRAY, CHIEF COUNSEL
 MICHAEL W. SHEEHY, DEMOCRATIC COUNSEL

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
 PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE
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Support for Tougher Measures Against "Leaks" of Classified Information
Goss, Dixon Condemn Those Who Regard Secrets as Political Brickbats

WASHINGTON -- Today, in a closed hearing, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) heard testimony from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Department of Defense (DoD), and the Department of Justice (DoJ) on initiatives to detect and punish those within the U.S. Government who make unauthorized disclosures of classified information.

"I am pleased with the response of the agencies to Congressional concern over the damage caused by leaks," said Porter Goss (R-FL), Chairman of HPSCI. "I will support their efforts to find and punish those who compromise our national security for personal or political gain."

This was the second of the two hearings planned by HPSCI on the subject of leaks. On November 3d of last year, HPSCI heard testimony from CIA, DoD, DoJ, the National Security Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the damage caused by those who leak such information. "What we found," Goss said, "was a hemorrhage of national security information that jeopardizes our ability to stay informed and to protect our interests around the world." Moreover, he noted, there is a monetary cost to taxpayers. "Some leaks have compromised multi-billion dollar programs, rendering them useless or greatly limiting their effectiveness." At the November 3d hearing, Goss and Julian Dixon (D-CA), Ranking Democrat on HPSCI, asked the agencies to develop and propose new procedures for detecting leakers and new remedies for prevention or punishment.

Today, the Members of HPSCI learned that, since their November hearing, CIA had identified and referred over 20 additional leaks for investigation. They also, however, learned that the agencies were developing new techniques for identifying those responsible for the leaks. "It is clear to me," Goss said, "that Congress and the agencies can work together to improve our ability to detect and deter unauthorized disclosures without affecting civil rights and liberties. I am heartened by what I heard today and intend to help get the agencies what they need for their budgets for fiscal year 2001." Goss is hopeful that these efforts will lead to the detection and punishment of leakers in the near future.

"The witnesses today reinforced how difficult a task it is to uncover those who, although entrusted with the care of classified information, improperly disclose it for their own purposes. It is important that we do what we can, consistent with constitutional protections, to make this task easier, but it is also important that we be realistic about what can be achieved in this area," Dixon stated.

Goss, a former case officer in CIA, is uniquely aware of the damage caused by leaks. "People around the world risk their lives or well being to help us," he said. "That someone in Washington would put those people at risk in order to make a point or to engrandize himself is appalling to me." Worst of all, Goss added, are those in Washington who treat secrets as political brickbats. "It's a true scoundrel, no matter what his political ilk, who seeks to win a political point by compromising hard-won and fragile secrets and their means of collection."